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Testimony Submitted by

State Representative Kelvin Roldán

from Hartford

Good afternoon Chairman Fleischmann and Chairman Stillman, Representative McCrory and Senator Fonfara, Ranking Member Giuliano and Ranking Member Boucher. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today.

I am here today to testify in support of the general intent of the Governor's proposal, Senate Bill No. 24 AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS. It is time that Connecticut became serious about closing the most significant achievement gap in the country. I want to thank the Governor for tackling this issue without any reservations.

I want to thank the members of the committee for your leadership and courage in providing more tools to districts like Hartford, New Haven and all districts across Connecticut.

Over the last five years it has been my honor to help lead the education reform efforts in the City of Hartford. In my travels across the country, one of the consistent messages I hear from education policy groups and foundations is that Connecticut lacks the proper policy framework and capacity to incentivize positive change and sustained growth.

The State of Connecticut has been traditionally unable to provide the necessary leadership for advancing and supporting a reform agenda. The Department of Education is organized in a way that emphasizes bureaucratic compliance and hinders progress. As such, districts have been forced to find ways to solve these issues on their own. The Commissioner's reorganization proposal would go a long way in solving Connecticut's national image. It would certainly make us more competitive with national foundations and competitive processes such as Race to the Top.

During my time in the Mayor's Office in Hartford, I led the design and creation of the Office for Young Children. I wholeheartedly support the Governor's proposal of increasing the number of seats available to high-need children. However, my hope is that more emphasis be placed on ensuring the children are reading on grade level by third grade. Backwards mapping to the Common Core Standards expectation to the Pre-K experience so that the overall learning experience aligns with the more rigorous Common Core Standards is certainly a must.

I would also like to encourage the Committee to look at the issue of funding equity in early childhood programming. We currently have in place an incoherent system that funds children in an inequitable fashion. A child attending a magnet school for Pre-K is funded at a much higher level than a student attending a School Readiness funded program. We need a more equitable playing field for all children if we are to hold teachers accountable for their outcomes.

Once again, I want to thank the Committee Members for their indulgence and for the opportunity to testify.

Thank you.